STRATEGIC PLANNING

As physiotherapy clinic owners/manager we often find ourselves ‘putting out fires’ and ‘chasing our tail’. We can constantly feel busy, yet question whether or not we are actually making progress! One way to focus our energy and set a clear path towards success… is by creating a strategic plan.

A strategic/annual plan is both a process and an end result. It is an exercise that forces the owner/manager to take an in-depth look at the business and to focus the business’s activities and energy towards the achievement of the overall goals and objectives.

A strategic/annual plan will outline what you plan to achieve over the upcoming year or more. It will clearly describe your plan to get there, the resources needed to achieve the outlined goals, who is responsible for each plan, and a reasonable and achievable timeline to achieve the goals &/or execute the plan.

When should strategic planning be done?

This depends on the needs of your particular physiotherapy clinic and the external environment. For some clinics, it may be appropriate to participate in this process once or twice a year. Business’s should definitely ‘Plan’ when they are first getting started as part of the original Business Plan and in preparation for any new venture. Otherwise, it is recommended that strategic planning be completed annually in preparation for the upcoming fiscal year.

Where to Start:

Whether you are developing your ‘Plan’ on your own or with the help of a business coach/advisor/consultant, your Mission and Vision Statements are a great place to start! They will provide you with the information you need to focus your efforts towards what it is that your business is hoping to achieve…short term and long term.

The Mission Statement basically describes the overall purpose of your business/clinic. It outlines what you do (the purpose of the organization), how you do it (the business of the organization), for whom you do it, and what you stand for, and why you do it (what principles, beliefs, values guide the work of the organization).

The Vision Statement is the ‘vision’ of how you want to see your business/clinic in the future; in terms of growth, values, employees, contributions to society, and the like.
Using the Mission and Vision Statements as your guide, you must next perform a SWOT analysis.

**SWOT Analysis:**

This is the process by which you take an in-depth look at your business in terms of its key strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities. It is suggested that you write down each topic and attempt to list as many factors/issues as you can under each heading. For instance; one of your businesses key strengths may be the experience of your staff, the clinic location, and your up to date equipment. Your weaknesses may be such things as poor parking, small waiting room, outdated equipment, or limited staff. Threats are issues such as a competitive market, potential for poor funder contracts, or an unsupportive physician base. Opportunities present themselves in such forms as expanding therapist qualifications & training, new service programming, new businesses moving to the area (increasing the population base with insurance coverage), etc.

**Determine Objectives:**

Keeping in mind your Mission Statement, Vision Statement and SWOT Analysis, you are now able to determine the key Business Objectives that you plan to achieve over the short-term (fiscal year) and long-term (3-5 years or longer). It is best to involve those people responsible for implementing the plan and keep your objectives realistic. By definition, objectives are described as being very precise, time-based, and measurable actions that support the completion of a goal. These will give you focus and provide direction when you begin to create your Key Strategies. For example; a Business Objective may be to increase the total number of patient visits by 5% over last year.

**Determine Key Strategies:**

Now that you have a clear picture of what you want to achieve and the issues that will support or challenge your ability to achieve these objectives, it is time to develop the Key Strategies that your business/clinic will pursue over the upcoming fiscal year. This requires that you set out specific short term goals that must be met in order to achieve the broader Business Objectives. Using the above example, some key strategies may be to hire another physiotherapist, increase support staff, & expand facility hours of operation.

**Determine Strategic Action Programs:**

Furthermore, each Key Strategy must be broken down into parts that specifically address what must be achieved. Specify who is responsible for each action item and make them directly accountable for
that portion of the ‘plan’ as part of their job description or performance review. Create specific timelines for completion of the action items that are achievable and clearly communicated to those individuals responsible.

**Your Plan is Complete:**

Now that the ‘Plan’ is complete, document the strategic plan and distribute to those responsible for implementing the ‘Plan’. Designate one individual to be ultimately responsible for the development, execution, revision, communication, and evaluation of the plan and the organizations progress towards successful achievement of the plans goals and objectives.

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